

## Core values

- **Respect for the dignity and contributions of all**
- **Fair and humane legal immigration system**
- **Citizenship**
- **Family unity**

Much like our nation's history, the histories of our many faith traditions are centered on the stories of migrants. Ours are immigrant communities who planted their faith and rooted their lives in this new land. The call to 'welcome the stranger' is strong: it compels us to advocate for aspiring Americans who wish to fully contribute to our society. Any meaningful immigration reform must include a fair and expedient process for undocumented immigrants and their families to attain citizenship.

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

Hebrews 13:2

Our faith communities include people from many countries and many economic backgrounds. We value the contributions of each regardless of their wealth or country of origin. All deserve the opportunity to earn citizenship. Any pathway to citizenship should respect the dignity of all people, include the ability to be reunited with family members, and should not be inhibited by harsh requirements, like "touchback" measures or excessive fees and fines or employment or socioeconomic criteria.

DREAMers and agricultural and high-skilled workers are important contributors to our communities, but legislation must provide solutions for more than a select few. Prioritizing some members of our community while leaving others behind violates the values of our faiths. We expect Congress to work for the common good and keep families together by allowing immigrants of diverse educational and skill levels, and familial relations to access a path to citizenship. *(continued on next page)*

## *The face of immigration*

### Widian

My father was raised in a tiny village in Galilee, by loving parents who made a meager living as farmers. My mother, who was raised in an orphanage, married my father at seventeen. During my childhood, my father worked as a mechanic and my mother as a teacher. While our home was filled with love, my parents recognized that their children would have better opportunities for education and advancement in the U.S.

We came as visitors and overstayed our visa. My parents made many attempts to become "legal," spending money on lawyers who gave us false hope and left us wondering if we were ever going to have the chance to stop living in fear. As a child, I did not quite understand our immigration status; I only knew it was a secret we were never to mention to anyone.

My experience as an undocumented immigrant has informed my commitment to support those most in need. Throughout my years as a social worker, I have had the honor to meet God in at-risk youth, homeless men and women, the elderly, my faith community, friends, family, and strangers.

Recently, three months shy of my thirty-first birthday, with no criminal record, having lived in the U.S. at least five consecutive years, having arrived before age 16, and holding an advanced degree, I completed my application for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. But my new status is bittersweet as I continue to pray in hopeful expectation that undocumented immigrants all over the country will have the opportunity to live freely in our home.



*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*

Matthew 25:35

As people of faith, we advocate for a full and direct path to citizenship and we will oppose any legislation that simply seeks to “regularize” immigrants’ status. We believe that barring people from attaining citizenship creates a permanent underclass. This is unacceptable to people of faith and violates the very principles upon which this nation was built.

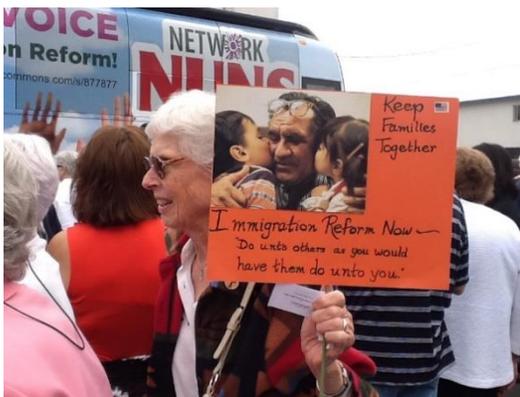
Congress must also expand access to green cards for individuals pursuing citizenship and fix the visa backlog that makes obtaining a green card difficult. A path to permanent second-class status, either by design or by failing to make the process accessible and timely, is contrary to the core principles of liberty and equality that our country proclaims.

## How do current immigration bills compare to our faith principles?

### Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act

**(S. 744/H.R. 15):** Both the Senate and the House immigration reform bills allow undocumented immigrants to access a pathway to citizenship. DREAMers and agricultural workers have access to special expedited paths, but the multi-level path to citizenship for most undocumented immigrants would last 13 years and cost \$2,000. This begins with Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status provided an immigrant entered the country on or before December 31, 2011; has not been convicted of a felony or 3+ misdemeanors; and has paid back taxes, fines, and fees. After a renewal of RPI status, immigrants may apply for Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR) and eventually apply for citizenship provided all requirements are met. The hurdles to attaining citizenship are punitive, expensive, lengthy, overly stringent and unnecessary. Both bills provide a path to citizenship that would help to keep most families together. We will

continue to seek to make citizenship more accessible to all undocumented immigrants and we request the House and Senate continue to work together to create legislation that has genuine reforms.



### Strengthen And Fortify Enforcement

**(SAFE) Act (H.R. 2278):** We oppose the SAFE Act, which would encourage racial profiling, reduce community safety, negatively impact refugees and asylees, and criminalize faith

communities that provide assistance to individuals regardless of immigration status. We are still waiting for Speaker Boehner and other members of Congress who support the “piecemeal approach” to get serious about real solutions to our broken immigration system, which our faiths tell us must include welcoming the stranger.

Additional resources:

Interfaith Immigration Coalition  
[interfaithimmigration.org](http://interfaithimmigration.org)

Migration Policy Institute  
[mpi.org](http://mpi.org)

Immigration Policy Center  
[immigrationpolicy.org](http://immigrationpolicy.org)



**Interfaith Immigration Coalition | [interfaithimmigration.org](http://interfaithimmigration.org) | May 2014** | African American Ministers in Action • American Baptist Home Mission Societies of the American Baptist Churches, USA • American Friends Service Committee • American Jewish Committee • Bread for the World • Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) • Church of the Brethren • Church World Service • Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach • Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Daughters of Charity • The Episcopal Church • Franciscan Action Network • Friends Committee on National Legislation • HIAS • Interfaith Worker Justice • Irish Apostolate USA • Islamic Information Center • Jesuit Refugee Service/USA • Jewish Council for Public Affairs • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office • Muslim Public Affairs Council • National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd • National Council of Churches • National Council of Jewish Women • NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby • Pax Christi USA • PICO National Network • Presbyterian Church USA, Office of Immigration Issues • Sisters of Mercy of the Americas • Sojourners • 3P Human Security • T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights • Union for Reform Judaism • Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations • United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries • United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society • UNITED SIKHS • U.S. Jesuit Conference • World Relief

*In America we finally found a country that gave us more rights, more freedom, more opportunities than we had ever known anywhere in our history outside of Israel. Can we do less than ensure an America where every immigrant is treated with the same respect and afforded safety and the opportunity to contribute?*

Rabbi David Saperstein  
The Religious Action Center  
of Reform Judaism

**13 years**

Proposed length of time for undocumented immigrants to become citizens under S. 744 and H.R. 15

**\$2,000**

Cost of fees and fines (excluding back taxes) proposed for the path to citizenship in S. 744 and H.R. 15

**11 million**

Estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2013

*Immigration is really at the heart of most faiths because it's all about welcoming the stranger. I think it's because our history in the biblical times was all about being a nomad.*

Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK